STR8 UP

2024/25
Annual Report

STR8 UP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

André Poilièvre *Founder*
Dawn Robins *Board Chair*
Rodney Nataucappo *Vice Chair*
Charlie Clark *Treasurer*
Deb Hamp
Secretary/HR Commitee Chair
Meghan Durocher *Director*
Melissa Naytowhow *Director*
Hunter Nippi-Thirsk *Director*
Brian Kishayinew *Director*
Prisca Bravo *Director*

MISSION STATEMENT

STR8 UP assists individuals in mastering their own destiny and liberating themselves from gangs, addictions & criminal street lifestyles.

VISION

Former gang members contributing to a healthy society.

VALUES

Honesty, Humility, Accountability.

PHILOSOPHY

At the heart of the STR8 UP guiding principles is a member-driven philosophy where members are core to all relations and activities.

Cover Art by Logan Sweezy

Letter From the STR8 UP Board

I would first like to express gratitude for my fellow board members and the team at STR8 UP for all of their work and dedication over the past year.

I have been involved with STR8 UP since 2008, first as part of the Provincial Gang Strategy and later as part of the team that developed the application for the GVRS-CIM Project. When André approached me to ask if I would be interested in sitting on the Board of Directors, I was honored to put my name forward.

Over the past year we have steered the organization through a process of change and development. This has included training across all levels of the organization and an intentional approach to identifying areas of organizational infrastructure that need to be updated due to the organization's incredible growth over the past five years. This process of development included the purchase of a permanent home for STR8 UP.

We were blessed to have André's guidance and support over the past year as we embarked on this process. We will continue to build a strong foundation for STR8 UP that stays true to the mission and values of the organization and honours André's legacy.

Sincerely,

Dawn Robins

Letter From the Interim Co-Executive Directors

Building the internal infrastructure STR8 UP needs to handle the depth and breadth of the work we do across the province was a major goal this year. We would like to acknowledge and thank helpers and members for their willingness to learn, their patience, and especially their hard work and dedication during this time.

Over the past year STR8 UP's focus on organizational development has enabled us to strengthen our systems and processes, building our capacity to track meaningful data, analyze our programming more deeply and evaluate outcomes of the work we do. This includes the ability to track growth across STR8 UP's four phases in the healing journey — Decision Making, Transition, Transformation, and Stabilization. This work will continue throughout the coming year.

As part of this process the decision was made to change how we support members to secure stable housing. This meant to dismantling of our existing Transitional Housing program and building collaborative partners with other agencies offering Transitional Housing. Thanks to a generous donor, we were able to purchase the KAP Building in Saskatoon. We have operated out of the KAP Building for many years and it will now be a permanent home for us.

Most recently, we experienced a significant loss. Father André, our founder and dear friend, passed away in June. Throughout the pages of this Annual Report are words shared by STR8 UP members in honour of André and his legacy.

On behalf of STR8 UP's Members, Board of Directors, and Staff, we would like to thank Funders, Donors, and Supporters for your trust in us over the past year. As we turn the page on the next chapter, we invite you to continue to walk beside STR8 UP in work that transforms individuals and communities10,000 steps at a time.

Sincerely,

Stan Tu'inukuafe & Fionncara MacEoin

STR8 UP

10 Guiding Principles

1. It is necessary to offer alternatives to the negative and vicious stereotypes with which we too often have been labeled.
2. Healing of individuals and groups goes hand-in-hand.
3. The journey of healing begins where we find ourselves, not where we want to be or are expected to be.
4. Healing comes from within but it is everyone's responsibility to support it.
5. Healing is a long, difficult, and painful process, full of setbacks, failures and slips.
6. STR8 UP does not duplicate programs and services available within the community.
7. STR8 UP is not battling active street gang members and does not actively recruit new members.
8. STR8 UP Intervention is accomplished through Prevention of gang involvement among youth within the community.
9. STR8 UP is a Spiritual-based group.
10. It becomes necessary to possess a vision of new changes and new possibilities to begin the healing journey.

In Loving Memory

Fr. André Poilievre
August 12th, 1936 to July 2nd, 2025

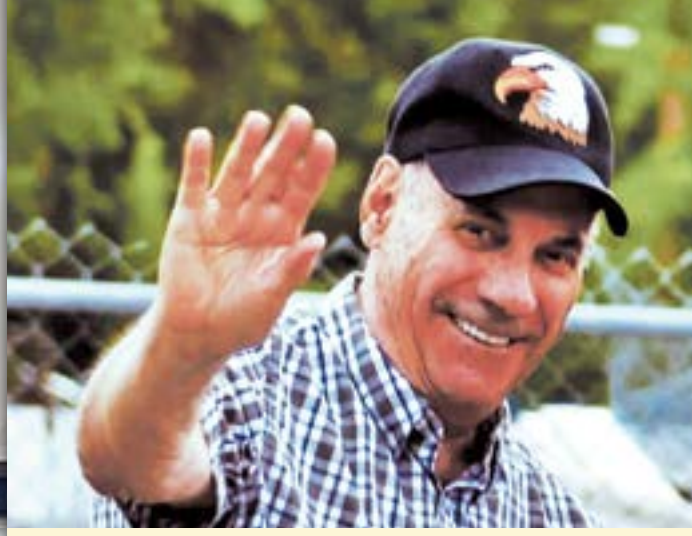
What made Father André special wasn't just how much he gave, but how he gave. He took time for people. He made time for people.

Father André offered encouragement without expectation, never judging, just listening with patience and care. His words didn't always come with solutions, but they always came with compassion and that, more than anything, reminded you that you weren't alone, and you would get through it.

He gave quietly, consistently, and wholeheartedly. His support never came with conditions. He didn't see titles, roles, or mistakes, he saw people. His legacy is not just in the work he did, but in the people he touched, in those quiet conversations, the shared laughs, the moments of truth when someone needed to be seen and heard.

Father André often said that STR8 UP does not walk in front to lead or behind to direct but walks beside to support. He lived these words. He believed them deeply. Through this lens of compassion, he invited communities to understand that healing is a collective responsibility, and that everyone deserves a second chance sometimes even a third or fourth. He reminded us that transformation is possible when compassion leads the way.

We celebrate Father André not because he was perfect, but because he was real, steadfast, funny, wise, and deeply human. We will miss him more than we can say. We already do. We will carry him with us. In the way we show up for others. In how we listen. In how we lead. And in every act of kindness, patience, and courage that he modeled for us.



He taught me how to be a loving parent. What a faithful partner truly looks like. And what it means to be a responsible citizen. These weren't just teachings, this was the vision for members of STR8 UP. Everyone knew who Father André was, but not everyone took the time to sit with him, to really listen. I did.

I felt drawn to keep up with our phone calls and visits, because he had a special place in my heart. If it weren't for him and his vision, the heart of STR8 UP, I honestly don't know where I'd be today. He helped me understand the why.

How come I grew up in poverty?

How come my mom chose drugs and men over us?

How come my dad left me as a baby?

He never judged. He taught me that all our spiritual values carry both a light and a shadow. Dishonesty to honesty, vindictiveness to humility, hate to love. And he reminded us that we can choose the light. He walked beside us. Not ahead, not behind. Never pushing, always guiding. He helped me, and so many others, find this new, beautiful life. I will carry his teachings, his love, and his memory with me forever. I will miss you, André.

Thank you for walking with me. CM

André taught me love, through consistency, stability, and selflessness...it is through these teachings I break cycles with the darkness surrounding me. DN

The Gifts You Shared

We often laughed
when times were tough
and there was no easy road
before us.

You had a gift for seeing
in me, and in others
what we didn't see inside ourselves

I hear your voice
when I think of what I need to do
no judgment in your tone
but common sense and decency.

You listened
always, the silences easy,
our conversations full.

You understood relationships
are give and take, and "mentor"
was not a word you used.

But you taught me more
than I could ever thank you for.

I count myself lucky, blessed
thankful our paths converged
that I could walk
these steps with you.

Someone I could call on anytime,
at any hour. Thank you

for your wisdom, your humour,
your deep understanding.
But mostly,

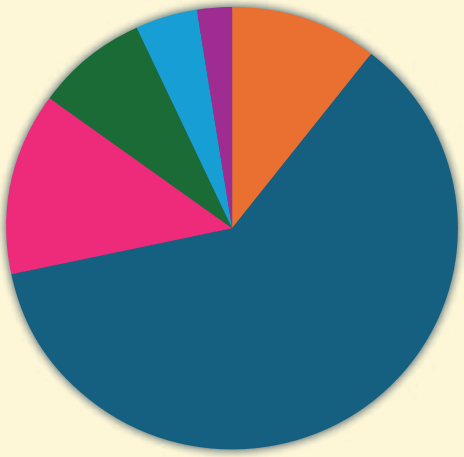
thank you for the way
you always welcomed me
and let me know

on this path,
I have a friend.

STR8 UP Outreach 2024-25

Outreach is the heart of the work STR8 UP does—supporting individuals in mastering their own destiny and liberating themselves from gangs, addiction, and criminal street lifestyles. This work often begins behind the walls, where STR8 UP Helpers build relationships with members through in-person visits and one-on-one support in both youth and adult correctional facilities. These connections are built on trust, empathy, and shared lived experience. Helpers assist members in working through STR8 UP's conditions and goals, while also providing advocacy, facilitating family contact, and connecting individuals to services, resources, and cultural supports.

This trusted relationship continues post-release, providing consistent support as members reintegrate into the community. That transition—from custody to community—is one of the most vulnerable points in a person's journey, and STR8 UP is there to walk alongside them every step of the way. That continuity of care is often what makes the difference between success and recidivism.



- Relationship Building **61%**
- Individualized Member Supports **11%**
- Cultural & STR8 UP Supports **2%**
- Addiction & External Agency Supports **5%**
- Life skills, Health & Well Being Supports **8%**
- Education & Employment Supports **13%**

kiskinohamakewin

The Study and Supper program continued through the year, contributing to our goal of helping members become responsible and engaged citizens. While attendance numbers were smaller, the program provided meaningful support to members pursuing adult education, youth completing grade 12 diplomas, and individuals enrolled at FNU.

We also supported members registering their children in their neighborhood schools. Assistance was also given to those seeking employment skills.

Through a combination of academic assistance, mentorship, and shared meals, participants were able to strengthen both their educational achievements and their sense of community connection.

- Two STR8 UP Members, successfully completed their nail technician certificates—a significant milestone in their commitment to becoming responsible citizens.
- STR8 UP Members have continued to give back to the community—volunteering at clean-up initiatives, preparing meals, and showing up for those in need.
- STR8 UP has been strengthening our presence in Regina, building meaningful partnerships and wraparound supports that ensure members there have consistent access to cultural, emotional, and practical support.
- Two STR8 UP members closed their CFS files with the ministry and regained custody of their children.
- Nine members graduated from a cooking program in partnership with the Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre.
- Women's Gatherings: STR8 UP sisters met for crafting, conversation, and discussions on women's topics over food, laughter, and connection.
- Member Engagement Days: Monthly events bringing together members and helpers for activities, teachings, and relationship building.
- Member Achievements: Graduation from the FNU Indigenous Social Work program, Saskatoon campus. Completion of the Leadership Saskatoon program.

STR8 UP Outreach 2024-25

STR8 UP has given me positive people to surround myself with & positive supports I can turn to when I need to. It has also given me a chance to look back on my life. STR8 UP gives us ex-gang members a place to turn to. Don't dwell on your past mistakes, look at what you can do better in the future. MM

STR8 UP Cultural Programming supports members to connect with culture as part of their healing journey. STR8 UP regularly takes members to Sweat Lodge ceremonies in Whitecap Dakota Nation, Beardy's Okemasis Cree Nation, One Arrow Cree Nation, Martinsville, Wahpeton Dakota Nation, and Ahtakakoop Cree Nation.

Members have also gone to Sundance and Sundance Singings. Members have been learning about fasting and how to prepare for Sundance. This year three members took part in Sundance at Beardy's Okemasis Cree Nation. We have also attended Round Dances and Powwows at Beardys Okemasis Cree Nation, One Arrow Cree Nation, Whitecap Dakota Nation, Kawatoose Cree Nation, and Ahatkakoop Cree Nation. We have also picked Sage, Sweetgrass, and Cedar to use over the coming winter.

Traditional Life Skills workshops gave members the opportunity to learn more about their culture and teachings that they may not have had the chance to learn while they were growing up. We also spent time practicing drum singing and learning how to sing different songs. We continue to offer Sharing Circles with an Educational Component each week to members in the community.

STR8 UP Outreach 2024-25

My name is Sheanna Ruby Desire Denego. I am from One Arrow First Nations, SK. I have been a member of STR8 UP since July 5, 2023.

I reached out to STR8 UP after my release date and since then I have been committed to staying sober and healthy. I gave my life to God. Since then, I have got my kids back, got us a home and I started working with STR8 UP in the Trainee to Mentor Program.

Working at STR8 UP has been good for my wellbeing, it has kept me on track and committed to my healing journey. It has also given me skills and tools for the workplace and in an office. I have gained confidence and people skills. I have also become more comfortable working with computers, making PowerPoints, using Microsoft Office, and working as part of a team.

I also participated in STR8 UP Presentations and in doing so, I slowly gained the confidence to speak publicly about my story and transformational journey. I also had the opportunity to organize Craft 'N Chat, the women's group for our female members to come together and heal. I just want to say thank you to STR8 UP and to all the mentors who helped me along the way. I am grateful for my continued growth, the support, the friendships, and the community.

STR8 UP Trainee-to-Mentor Training Program

STR8 UP's 15-month Trainee-to-Mentor Program supports STR8 UP members on their journey toward healing, growth, and leadership in the wider community.

The primary purpose of this program is to support members mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually as they work on personal and professional development.

The program is grounded in STR8 UP's spiritual values of honesty, humility, and accountability and is designed to help them master the hard and soft skills needed to pursue employment and/or educational opportunities beyond STR8 UP.

The program is divided into 5 Phases over the course of 15 months. As members transition through the phases, their responsibilities, mentorship, and opportunities for personal growth, healing, and professional development are gradually increased.

Father André spoke truth, never with an intention to put anyone down or make himself the hero. He simply reminded folks to be accountable and that we all have the power to change. He saw past flaws, lies and hurt and saw human beings. JS

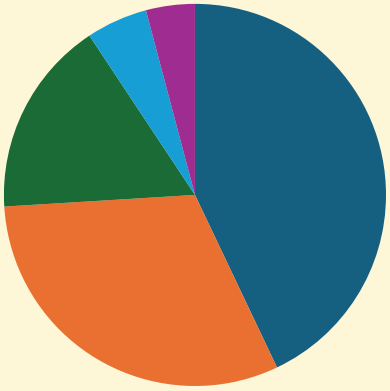
STR8 UP Federal Institution Outreach 2024-25

- **STR8 UP, CYNC and AKA Artist-Run Centre came together to do a photo voice project. The project culminated in a Window Project at AKA. A book titled "Inside & Outside – STR8 UP & CNYC Stories and Photos" was published as part of the project.**
- **In partnership with the University of Alberta's Faculty of Native Studies, STR8 UP delivered 44 Christmas Hampers and hosted two Christmas dinners for members incarcerated at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary.**
- **Members attended the Narcotics Anonymous campout at Sturgeon Lake First Nation, building connections with the recovery community and participating in pro-social activities.**
- **The federal team relocated to the B8 Upper Centre at Saskatchewan Penitentiary to streamline services and consolidate the entire Indigenous Initiatives team in one shared space.**

STR8 UP Helpers continue to support incarcerated STR8 UP members at Willow Cree Healing Lodge & Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, Saskatchewan Penitentiary (Multi-Level), Prince Albert Grand Council Spiritual Healing Lodge, and Institutions across Canada.

In 2024, the STR8 UP federal team managed 103 new referrals and facilitated over a dozen tattoo removal appointments. They supported more than twenty escorted temporary absences into the community, including attendance at NA/AA meetings and STR8 UP functions. The team remained active with numerous virtual visits to members in institutions across Canada. They also conducted one-on-one visits, led multiple sharing circles, and made referrals to treatment centres, educational opportunities, employment services, and housing support. These ongoing efforts have kept the team consistently engaged throughout the year.

As STR8 UP Helpers continue to advocate, support, encourage and assist members inside and outside corrections, to fully transform their lives from an unhealthy past to a heathy future, STR8 UP understands we cannot accomplish this alone. Thank you to the families of members, community stakeholders, and Correctional Service Canada staff for your belief and support in the possibility of transformation.



- Relationship Building **43%**
- Individualized Member Supports **31%**
- Cultural & STR8 UP Supports **17%**
- Addiction & External Agency Supports **5%**
- Life skills, Health & Well Being Supports **4%**

STR8 UP Tattoo Removal Service 2024-25

Total Clients 43

Tattoo Removals 231

STR8 UP's certified Laser Tattoo Removal is a free service provided to members of STR8 UP and individuals in the community or in correctional facilities who have gang-related tattoos or tattoos that are negatively impacting their ability to succeed in the community.

For many ex-gang members, tattoos often serve as lasting reminders of a troubled past. These tattoos, which typically symbolize gang affiliation, loyalty, or specific life experiences, can become a barrier to personal transformation and reintegration into society.

In many cases, laser tattoo removal goes beyond aesthetics; it is part of a larger process of personal healing and transformation.

STR8 UP members seeking tattoo removal often view it as a step toward a fresh start. For some, removing tattoos signifies the end of a violent and troubled chapter in their lives and the beginning of a journey toward self-improvement, employment opportunities, and social acceptance.

Having visible tattoos related to gang affiliation can create significant barriers when trying to reintegrate into society, especially when applying for jobs, housing, or educational opportunities. By removing these tattoos, individuals may find it easier to break free from their past and forge a new identity that aligns with their current values and aspirations.

STR8 UP Laser Tattoo Removal Program aims to help its members and those in community who may face economic challenges but are committed to changing their lives.

Community support, along with the physical transformation that comes with tattoo removal, plays a crucial role in the healing process. By providing ex-gang members with access to these treatments STR8 UP helps foster an environment of second chances, promoting healing and offering a path forward for those seeking to leave their past behind.

STR8 UP Transitional Housing Supports 2024-25

From 2020 to 2025, STR8 UP provided Transitional Housing to members being released from correctional facilities.

During this time, we supported residents in our housing program to secure employment, access treatment programs, A.A, N.A, enroll in school or life skills training, and secure stable, long-term housing.

Members were also connected to essential health services such as doctors, dentists, and optometrists, participated in cultural ceremonies, sharing circles, and STR8 UP transformational led presentations.

When we started our Transitional Program in 2020, there were no existing Transitional Housing programs specifically for individuals being released from provincial and federal institutions—making it a unique and much-needed service that aligned with our mission and principles at the time.

As an organization, we are committed to respect our Guiding Principles. One of which is that:

STR8 UP does not duplicate programs and services already available within the community.

By 2025 the supported housing landscape had changed and there are now a number of other agencies offering Transitional Housing.

In 2025, after much discussion and thought it was decided that STR8 UP would close the existing Transitional Housing Program and alter the way in which we support our members to find and maintain stable housing.

As part of this change, STR8 UP has partnered with organizations whose core mission is focused on housing.

STR8 UP has current partnerships with Elizabeth Fry Society (2 beds), Oxford House (5 beds) and Crocus Co-operative (4 beds).

This collaborative approach allows STR8 UP to continue supporting its members with housing solutions while strengthening relationships by dedicating more time to direct support and engagement.

SOME KEY THINGS WE LEARNED

- Due to funding requirements, in the early days, STR8 UP had to accept individuals who were not STR8 UP members. This presented challenges in case-planning and following the culture and spiritually of STR8 UP.
- Several challenges contributed to the discontinuation of STR8 UP's Transitional Housing Program. These included delays in members receiving financial assistance, unsuccessful bail outcomes, non-payment of rent, premature departures from the program, and a reduction in staff funding.
- There remains a significant need for housing options for members considered "high risk to reoffend," most existing housing programs are unable or unwilling to accommodate them. We continue to explore ways to offer housing support to our members in ways that are sustainable, effective and in keeping with our Guiding Principles.

Father André carried a wisdom that can't be found in books. It was lived, earned, and shared so freely. The amount of knowledge he passed on to me and to so many others, was a gift. A selfless man with a vision so much greater than himself. JR

STR8 UP Community Presentations 2024-25

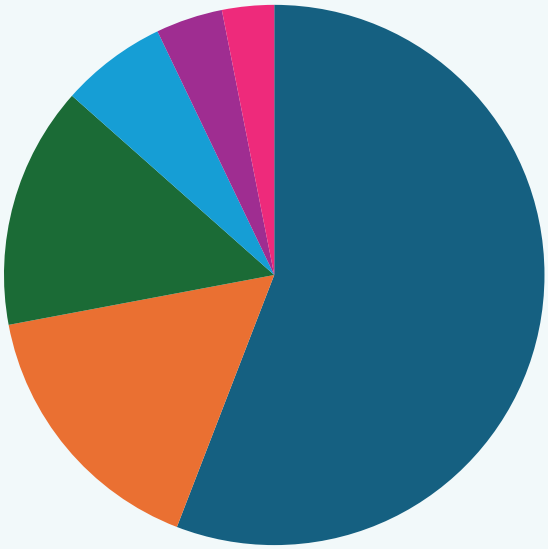
Some presentations STR8 UP Members were able to be involved in this year:

- **Calder Centre**
- **St. Thomas More College**
- **Saskatoon Men's Reintegration Unit**
- **White Buffalo Youth Treatment Centre**
- **Justice and Health Symposium, La Ronge**
- **Marguerite Riel Women's Conference**
- **SK Gang Violence Reduction Strategy**
- **Chief Whitecap School**
- **SCC DATSU**
- **PGCC DATSU**
- **PACC DATSU**
- **wâhkôhtowin School**
- **Possibilities Recovery Center**
- **Chokecherry Studios**
- **Oxford House Saskatchewan**
- **Canoe Lake First Nation**
- **Prince Albert Outreach Program Inc.**
- **University of Saskatchewan**
- **Saskatoon Police Service**
- **Unifor Laborer Union**
- **Kilburn Hall Youth Centre**
- **Yellow Quill First Nation**
- **Saskatchewan Health Authority**
- **Meadow Lake Tribal Council**
- **Correctional Service Canada**
- **File Hills Qu'appelle Tribal Council**

In his book *Indictment: The Criminal Justice System on Trial*, Benjamin Perrin, a Professor of Law at the University of British Columbia, writes, Trauma that is not transformed is transmitted. At STR8 UP, we firmly believe that one of the most powerful ways our members can start to transform their trauma is by sharing their stories openly, honestly, and humbly.

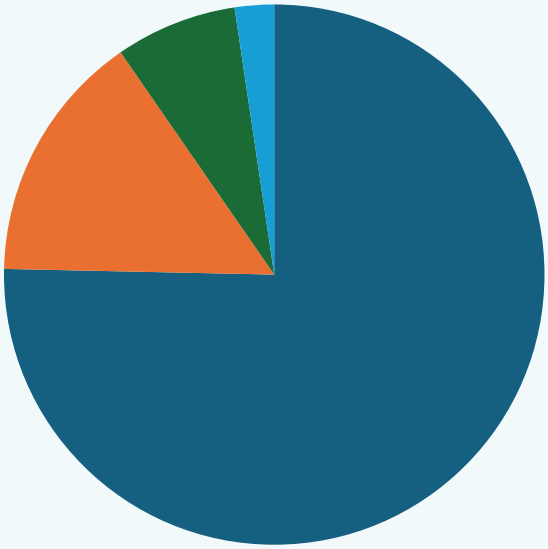
As members share their stories openly, honestly, and humbly in schools, treatment centers, First Nation communities, universities, and more, healing begins. Through this process, they reclaim their voice, make sense of their past, transform pain into purpose and take ownership of their story.

STR8 UP Income & Expenses 2024-25



INCOME $2,008,802.00

- Saskatchewan Ministry of Corrections and Policing **56%**
- Transitional Housing Grants **16%**
- Department of Justice Canada **15%**
- Community Grants **6%**
- Presentations, Donations & Fundraising **4%**
- Transitional Housing Rental Income **3%**



EXPENSES $2,086,977.00

- Salaries & Benefits, Training & Professional Fees **75%**
- Direct Program Costs **15%**
- Mortgage & Administration **7%**
- Vehicles & Transportation **3%**

André was the epitome of guidance and understanding. What I learned from him laid the foundation of how I would treat others around me. When I was hopeless, he offered me hope. When I was afraid, he showed me courage. He taught me that no matter where you come from in this world, you are worthy and can accomplish great things, "but you have to do the work" he would say. Without him, I would not be who I am today. ST

Thank you for believing in me, I love you André. CH

STR8 UP Funders & Donors 2024-25

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to our supporters and donors for their contribution to STR8 UP 10,000 Little Steps to Healing Inc.

Every donation is important to us.

It helps impact not only the people that we work with directly, but also the larger community as a whole.

Community Initiatives Fund

South Saskatchewan Community Foundation

Rotary Saskatoon North

Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership

Dakota Dunes Community Development Corporation

Correctional Service Canada

Canada

Government of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon Community Foundation

Affinity Credit Union

United Way Saskatoon & Area

City of Prince Albert

City of Saskatoon

STR8 UP: 10,000 Little Steps to Healing Inc.
226 Avenue V South
Saskatoon, SK
S7M 3E3
306.244.1771
www.str8-up.ca

Find us on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram